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Text:

C O N F I D E N T I A L                    ANKARA 01705  
CX:

ACTION: AMB  
INFO: RAO POL PMA ECON DCM

DISSEMINATION: AMB /1  
CHARGE: PROG

APPROVED: POL:DJO'GRADY  
DRAFTED: POL:DJO'GRADY  
CLEARED: POL:JHOWARD

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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 1342  
INFO RUEHZL/EUROPEAN POLITICAL COLLECTIVE PRIORITY  
RUEHGB/AMEMBASSY BAGHDAD PRIORITY 1519  
RUEHKB/AMEMBASSY BAKU PRIORITY 1641  
RUEHTV/AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV PRIORITY 0242  
RUEHYE/AMEMBASSY YEREVAN PRIORITY 1394

C O N F I D E N T I A L ANKARA 001705

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT ALSO FOR EUR/SE

E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/24/2014  
TAGS: PGOV PHUM PREL TU  
SUBJECT: TURKEY: INFLUENTIAL JOURNALIST'S SOBER VIEW

REF: ANKARA 1691

Classified By: Political Counselor Daniel O'Grady; reason 1.4 (d).

¶1. (C) SUMMARY. On November 18 Radikal columnist Murat Yetkin, one of the most influential journalists in Turkey, provided us with a broad sweep of insights into current affairs. These included his "fatalistic" mood on the Dogan Media fine, his lament that the USG has not taken a more prominent position against this perceived abuse of governmental power, and his projection that Parliamentary action on the Armenia Protocols will be a particularly difficult sell given very low public support, according to the latest polls. We view Yetkin's opinions as representative of those held by Turkey's increasingly unsettled secular elite. END SUMMARY.

¶2. On domestic issues, Yetkin made the following points:

-- The government's dogged pursuit of the Dogan Media tax case has made Dogan journalists fatalistic. They appreciated the EU's vocal criticism of the ruling party's apparent abuse of governmental power. They believe the USG's relative reserve reflected our discomfort with Dogan's near-monopoly control of some media sectors.

-- Turkey's journalists and its business elite are intimidated by the ease with which the government has pursued its punitive policies against Dogan. He expects the Koc Group to be the government's next target.

-- The ruling AKP is ruthless against its opponents and is consolidating power. Previous government's had done the same, but with a crucial difference: AKP no longer has a "Deep State" to keep it in check.

-- Government mismanagement of its Democratic Opening

initiative is engendering anti-Kurdish felling among Turks in western Anatolia. Izmir, the most liberal city in Turkey and a magnet for Kurds migrating from the southeast, reacted strongly against the visit of DTP co-chair Ahmet Turk. The Kurdish Regional Government (KRG) is the key to the Democratic Opening. (Comment: Presumably because it is important to convincing the PKK that it is no longer welcome in Iraq.)

-- The spodic release of Ergenekon-related "Action Plan" documents is increasingly suspicious. The timing of the anonymous releases often concides with the government's being under fire for a policy mis-step.

-- Turks widely believe the USG supports controversial Muslim cleric Fetullah Gulen. The U.S. continues to host Gulen even though charges against him have been dropped. Gulen and the Turkish General Staff (TGS) are locked in a death struggle, which is odd since TGS initially encouraged Gulenist schools.

Now, the Gulenists are enormously influential, especially given their hold over the Turkish National Police. Gulen is not seeking to impose Sharia in Turkey, but he aims to make the country much more Islamist.

On international issues, Yetkin said:

-- Erdogan will request POTUS pressure Armenia on Nagorno-Karabakh. Erdogan needs some movement there to push the protocols through parliament. A new poll reveals 98 percent approval for the government's criticism of Israel, 52 percent support for the Democratic Opening, but only 28 percent support for the rapprochement with Armenia. Erdogan has to proceed carefully. He can't just order his MPs to approve the protocols.

-- Erdogan will also tell POTUS time is running out on Cyprus. If this round of talks fails, the government will seek "a two-state solution." Erdogan will not seek the appointment of a U.S. special envoy. If he were to be rebuffed, he would lose credibility.

JEFFREY

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